

Salt Lake Japanese Church
7 Church

GROUP INTERVIEW
Project I.D. No. 6

NAME: ASANO, FRANK KOHEI DATE OF BIRTH: 1886 PLACE OF BIRTH: IWATE
Age: 84 Sex: M Marital Status: M Education: HIGH SCHOOL

PRE-WAR:

Date of arrival in U.S.: 1907 Age: 21 M.S. _____ Port of entry: SAN FRANCISCO
Occupation/s: 1. FARMING 2. ART SHOP 3. NEWSPAPER
Place of residence: 1. SAN FRANCISCO 2. _____ 3. _____
Religious affiliation: CHRISTIAN
Community organizations/activities: _____

EVACUATION:

Name of assembly center: TANFORAN
Name of relocation center: TOPAZ
Dispensation of property: SOLD Names of bank/s: _____
Jobs held in camp: 1. _____ 2. _____
Jobs held outside of camp: _____
Left camp to go to: SALT LAKE CITY

POST-WAR:

Date returned to West Coast: 0
Address/es: 1. _____ 2. _____
3. _____
Religious affiliation: CHRISTIAN
Activities: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: _____

Name of interviewer: TOICABE KATO Date: 1971 Place: SALT LAKE CITY
Translator: P. KATO

Let 5-6

A STUDY OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE
OF ISSEI IN THE USA

I. IN JAPAN

MY NAME IS FRANK KOHEI ASANO AND I AM A MEMBER OF THE SALT LAKE JAPANESE CHURCH OF CHRIST. I WAS BORN IN IWATE KEN, MORIOKA SHI, MAY 15, 1886. I AM 84 YEARS OLD NOW.

THERE ARE TWO EVENTS WHICH I REMEMBER ABOUT THE SINO-JAPANESE WAR. ONE EVENT OCCURRED AROUND MEIJI 27 OR 28 WHEN MATSUZAKI TAI CROSSED ANJOGAWA DURING A FURVUOUS BATTLE AND THE TIME WHEN HARA KOHEI BROKE THROUGH GENBU MON AND TOOK POSSESSION.

THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAS FOUGHT AROUND MEIJI 37 OR 38. I REMEMBER AS A YOUNG BOY GOING TO THE STATION WITH THE TOWN PEOPLE TO SEE THE SOLDIERS OFF TO WAR WHETHER IT WAS NIGHT OR DAY. I ALSO RECALL THE BIG BATTLE AT HOTEN WHEN JAPANESE SOLDIERS TOOK THOUSANDS OF RUSSIAN PRISONERS; THE SURRENDER OF RUSSIANS AT RYOJINKO; THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BALTIC FLEET, THE DISSATISFICATION OF THE JAPANESE NATIONALS REGARDING THE RUSSIAN-JAPANESE TREATY AND THE RIOT THAT FOLLOWED.

WORLD WAR I AND MANCHURIAN EVENTS OCCURRED AFTER I SETTLED IN AMERICA.

MY MOST PLEASANT AND ENJOYABLE RECOLLECTION IS MY SCHOOL DAYS.

THE SAD EVENTS THAT I RECALL ARE THE KANTO DAISHINSAI WHEN THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE PERISHED AND THE DISASTEROUS TIDAL WAVE THAT SWEEPED THE COAST OF AOMORI, IWATE AND MIYAGI. 30 THOUSAND LIVES WERE LOST AND I REMEMBER THE TREMENDOUS RESCUE ATTEMPTS MADE BY THE WHOLE NATION.

THE RELIGION OF MY FAMILY WAS BUDDHIST.

WHEN I WAS YOUNG, I HEARD THAT CHRISTIANITY WAS A HERETICAL RELIGION, BUT I LEARNED FROM A LADY MISSIONARY THAT IT WAS NOT SO. AFTER MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, I BELIEVED HER AND BECAME A CHRISTIAN.

I. IN JAPAN (CONTD)

MY FAMILY LED AN ORDINARY LIFE OF THAT TIME AND I WAS WORKING FOR THE PERFECTURAL GOVERNMENT OFFICE. THE FEVER OF COMING TO AMERICA WAS STRONG THEN AND I ALSO HAD GREAT HOPES OF GOING TO AMERICA.

I GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL.

MY REASON FOR COMING TO AMERICA WAS THAT AMERICA IS A FREE AND IDEAL COUNTRY WHERE EVERYONE WAS TREATED EQUALLY.

II. RECOLLECTIONS - ON BOARD SHIP TO AMERICA.

I LEFT JAPAN ON MAY 24, 1907 AND ARRIVED IN SEATTLE ON JUNE 7, 1907. THE PASSENGERS CONSISTED ALMOST ALL YOUNG PEOPLE. THE NAME OF THE SHIP WAS "MINNESOTA." I DO NOT REMEMBER ANY PARTICULAR HAPPENINGS ON BOARD SHIP.

I THOUGHT IT WAS A BIG, VAST COUNTRY AND I WANTED TO BECOME ONE OF THE PIONEERS.

III. FIRST IMPRESSION UPON LANDING IN AMERICA.

MY IMPRESSION OF AMERICAN WAS THAT IT WAS A HUGE COUNTRY AND EVERYTHING WAS VERY CONVENIENT - PEOPLE SEEMED WEALTHY. I WAS DELIGHTED. HAKUJINS WERE VERY FRIENDLY. MY FRIEND OWNED A RESTAURANT SO I HELPED HIM. I THOUGHT THE CAUCASIANS TREATED ME WITH KINDNESS. MY MAIN PROBLEM WAS NOT BEING ABLE TO SPEAK THE LANGUAGE AND TO COMMUNICATE FREELY. THE ONLY INCIDENT THAT I RECALL IS WHEN I WAS TRAVELING TO LOS ANGELES FROM SAN FRANCISCO, THE CHILDREN CALLED ME "JAP," WHICH KIND OF UPSET ME.

IV. PERIOD OF SETTLEMENT.

IN JAPAN, MY WIFE AND I BELONGED TO THE SAME CHURCH. SHE WAS THE MINISTER'S DAUGHTER. WE WERE MARRIED IN SAN FRANCISCO REFORMED CHURCH. I HAVE NO INTERESTING STORIES TO RELATE ABOUT PICTURE BRIDES. I DID NOT EXPERIENCE ANY HOMESICK-
DO I RECALL ANY
NESS NOR/ANY HARDSHIP. I HAD MANY AMERICAN FRIENDS AT THE CHURCH SO I CAN'T RECALL ANY DISCRIMINATORY ACTS., BUT I DO REMEMBER THE TIME WHEN A BARBER REFUSED TO CUT MY HAIR.

IV. PERIOD OF SETTLEMENT (CONTD)

I LEARNED ENGLISH IN JAPAN AND WHEN I CAME TO AMERICA, I ATTENDED NIGHT SCHOOL WHICH WAS SPONSORED BY THE CHURCH.

AFTER SEVERAL YEARS, I RECEIVED ABOUT \$20 TO \$30 A MONTH IN SOME PLACES WITH ROOM AND BOARD.

I PURCHASED 20 ACRES OF LAND WHICH WAS PLANTED WITH GRAPES IN 1920 - \$300 AN ACRE AND TEN YEARS TO PAY - FROM AN AMERICAN FARMER WHO WAS MOVING OUT OF STATE. I BOUGHT IT IN MY DAUGHTER'S NAME. NO ORGANIZATIONS HELPED ME. SINCE THERE WAS NO NEED FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE, I DID NOT ASK FOR ANY.

I DID NOT HAVE ANY PARTICULAR KIND OF HOBBY OR ENTERTAINMENT THAT I ENJOYED.

THE PROBLEM I HAD IN REARING OUR CHILDREN WAS MORE OR LESS FINANCIAL, AND I WANTED TO GIVE MY CHILDREN THE BENEFIT OF HIGHER EDUCATION. I AM VERY THANKFUL NOW THAT MY CHILDREN ARE EDUCATED AND HAVE THEIR OWN FAMILIES AND ARE DOING WELL.

I DID NOT SEND THE CHILDREN BACK TO JAPAN, BUT UPON LEARNING THAT MY WIFE'S MOTHER WAS GRAVELY ILL, MY WIFE AND THREE CHILDREN WENT TO JAPAN TO SEE HER AND THEY STAYED THREE YEARS.

SINCE I LIVED ON A FARM IN THE COUNTRY I DID NOT MAKE ANY CONTRIBUTION OR SERVICE DURING WORLD WAR I BUT I PURCHASED BONDS AS MUCH AS I CAN AND PRAYED FOR PEACE.

I ONLY HEARD RUMORS ABOUT SEGREGATED SCHOOLS.

WHEN I WAS ABOUT TEN YEARS OLD, A LADY MISSIONARY TREATED ME WITH MUCH KINDNESS AND LEARNED ABOUT CHRISTIANITY FROM HER.

V. DEPRESSION PERIOD

DURING DEPRESSION, I HAD TO CLOSE MY ART GOODS SHOP WHICH I OWNED IN CHINATOWN, SAN FRANCISCO.

AFTER MARRIAGE, I DECIDED TO STAY PERMANENTLY IN AMERICA.

VI. THE WORLD WAR II PERIOD

THE ATTITUDE OF THE AMERICANS WERE NO DIFFERENT - IT WAS SAME AS USUAL.

I THOUGHT IT WAS AGAINST THE JAPANESE BUSHIDO SPIRIT. AS A JAPANESE, I WAS ASHAMED. I THOUGHT IT WAS A COWARDLY ACT.

AT THAT TIME, I WAS A MEMBER OF THE OFFICE STAFF AT THE JAPANESE AMERICAN NEWSPAPER SO I KNEW ABOUT IT.

I WAS PREPARED FOR THE EVENTUAL RELOCATION OF ALL JAPANESE SO I WAS NOT TOO SURPRISED.

I SOLD ALL MY FURNITURE VERY CHEAPLY AND FOLLOWED THE GOVERNMENT'S ORDER.

MY AMERICAN FRIENDS WERE VERY SYMPATHETIC, AND SO WERE THE MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN CHURCHES.

MY ELDEST DAUGHTER, 23 YEARS OLD; MY ELDEST SON, 21 YEARS OLD, MY NEXT DAUGHTER, 19 YEARS OLD AND MY YOUNGEST SON, 9 YEARS OLD.

VII. ASSEMBLY CENTER, RELOCARION CENTER, WAR-TIME PERIOD

WE WERE TAKEN TO TANFORAN, A FORMER RACE TRACK, WHICH WAS LOCATED ABOUT TEN MILES SOUTH OF SAN FRANCISCO. WHEN WE ARRIVED EVERYTHING WAS INCOMPLETE AND LEFT MUCH TO BE DESIRED. FOOD WAS VERY POOR. IT WAS IN A STATE OF CONFUSION AND NO FORM OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT. IN EARLY OCTOBER, WE MOVED FROM TANFORAN ASSEMBLY CENTER TO TOPAZ RELOCATION CENTER IN UTAH.

IN TOPAZ, OUR PASTOR, S. F. METHODIST CHURCH, REV. TARO GOTO, WAS ASSAULTED ONE NIGHT BECAUSE SOME PEOPLE THOUGHT HE WAS A SPY. PROFESSOR CHIURA OBATA WAS ALSO ATTACHED AND PUBLIC FEELINGS WERE HIGH.

NISEIS ARE AMERICAN BORN CITIZENS SO IT IS NATURAL THAT THEY SHOULD BE FAITHFUL TO AMERICA. MY ELDEST SON, PAUL, WITH MY CONSENT, WAS AMONG THE FIRST TO VOLUNTEER FOR THE ARMY.

FROM THE FIRST WE WERE RESIGNED TO THE FACT THAT WE WOULD BE CONSIDERED AS AN ENEMY AND WAS NOT PARTICULARLY SURPRISED THAT WE WERE PUT INTO CONCENTRATION CAMP.

VII. ASSEMBLY CENTER, RELOCATION CENTER, WAR TIME PERIOD (CONTD)

IN RELOCATION CAMP, WE ENJOYED FREEDOM OF RELIGION SO THE CHURCHES WERE OPENED AND SERVICES HELD. THAT TO ME, AS A CHRISTIAN, WAS A COMFORT AND JOY.

I AM WORKING ON A FARMING PROJECT.

IN TRUE AMERICAN WAY, WE HAD RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, - CHURCH LIFE WAS MORE EARNEST THAN WHEN WE WERE OUTSIDE.

FORTUNATELY, SCHOOLS OPENED AND THE CHILDREN WERE ASSURED EDUCATION SO WE WERE GRATEFUL FOR THAT.

SINCE THERE WERE NO CONNECTIONS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD, NO WORRY ABOUT MONEY OR SHELTER, WE REGAINED OUR PRESENCE OF MIND AND HAD OPPORTUNITY FOR REFLECTION, FOR RELIGION, FOR STUDY. THESE WERE VALUABLE AND MEANINGFUL FOR ME.

MY FAITH DID NOT CHANGE BUT IT BECAME MORE HEIGHTENED AND I WAS ABLE TO PRAY MORE EARNESTLY.

VIII. RESETTLEMENT - RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

WE LEFT TOPAZ RELOCATION CENTER AROUND THE MIDDLE OF OCTOBER 1945.

WHEN THE EVACUATION ORDER WAS RESCINDED AND WE WERE FREE TO RELOCATE ANY PLACE WE CHOSE.

I WENT TO SALT LAKE CITY TO LOOK FOR WORK, AND LEARNED ABOUT A RENTAL OF FIVE ACRES OF LAND IN NEARBY SANDY.

OF COURSE TO MAKE A LIVING FOR MY SELF AND WIFE AND TO FARM.

WE TRIED MINK FARMING AND ON THE SIDE GREW VEGETABLES.

WE TRANSFERRED OUR MEMBERSHIP FROM S. F. METHODIST CHURCH TO THE S. L. CHURCH OF CHRIST.

SINCE SALT LAKE CITY IS THE HEADQUARTERS FOR THE MORMON RELIGION, PEOPLE GENERALLY ARE FRIENDLY AND THERE WAS NO DISCRIMINATION.

TO GIVE MY CHILDREN THE BENEFIT OF HIGHER EDUCATION WAS MY AIM.

TWO YEARS LATER THROUGH REV T. OTA'S RECOMMENDATION, WE MOVED TO BOUNTIFUL

VIII. RESETTLEMENT - RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD (CONTD)

AND I WORKED AS A GROWER FOR ~~THE~~ LUND FLORIST. I WORKED FULL TIME UNTIL I WAS 65 YEARS OLD AND FOR FIVE YEARS I WORKED HALF A DAY AND THE OTHER HALF A DAY I GREW FLOWERS ON MY OWN.

THERE WAS NO DISTRESSING EXPERIENCE. THE JAPANESE CHURCH IN SALT LAKE CITY WELCOMED NEW MEMBERS AND HELPED US IN MANY WAYS.

IV. CONCLUSION

AS A CHRISTIAN, MY HOPE IS THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD WILL COME ON EARTH AND THAT THERE WILL BE PEACE ON EARTH.